



SOMERSET TOWN JOURNAL



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Save the Date: **Brown Bag Lunch on Friday, December 13**



❄️❄️❄️ By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Please come to our last quarterly Brown Bag lunch of the year on **Friday December 13, from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m.** and take a look at our newly updated Town Hall!

As always, members of the Council and I will host anyone from Town interested in talking about issues, share a story or two, and help us decide on our agenda for the new year. Remember to bring a sandwich or dish to share—and a friend. Beverages, plates and utensils are provided.

Email me at mayor@townofsomerset.com if you have any questions.



Enjoy Singing with Your Neighbors.

Join the Somerset Chorus on December 15

By Jeanette Kreiser, Falstone Avenue | 

Many of you may recall the **Sometime Somerset Singers** from a few years past. Those in this chorus had a wonderful time learning new music and singing old familiar tunes with neighbors. Well, we're back at it again, and hope that you can attend our start-up get-together with singing and a potluck on **Sunday, December 15, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at our newly renovated Town Hall.** Everyone is welcome, including newcomers and singers of all ages. This is an event for everyone to come and sing together!

If you would like to attend, please send an email (Subject: Sometime Somerset Singers rsvp) to jskreiser@yahoo.com, and indicate how many persons will be attending with you.

Also, please indicate whether you will bring a main dish, side dish, drink, or dessert—OR something “other” than that. Due to fire codes, space will be limited.

If you have any well-known musical favorites (or specific genres of music) that would be suitable for this event (or for future events), please include your recommendations in your response. We will take your responses into consideration when developing selections for this—and future—gatherings. In making your suggestions, please remember that this event is for persons of all ages—including children through seniors. One of the major purposes of this activity is to provide a musical opportunity that families, friends and neighbors can all enjoy.

December is a busy month, but we hope you can make this event. And, watch for us again in the spring!



Calendar

Friday, December 3

Brown Bag Lunch

Thursday, December 12 (tentative)

Laugh a Yoga Class

Sunday, December 15

Somerset Chorus Get-Together

Monday, December 23

MVA Mobile Office

Don't forget to check the Town website throughout the month for an up-to-date calendar. Go to www.townofsomerset.com and click on **Town Calendar**.

The Preliminary Agenda for each month's Town Council meeting is posted on the Town website (www.townofsomerset.com) seven days prior to the meeting. A copy is also posted on the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch.



On My Mind

By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Religious Understanding

When I was “coming up” in a classic Montgomery County 50s/60s suburban household, it was understood that in polite company one did not talk politics, sex or religion.

This is quite a contrast to the outlook in today’s media explosion where these topics are about the only thing we talk about! Of course, it is arguable whether or not this is progress.

On the subject of religion and in the Somerset context, I have noticed over the past decade how we have many more religions represented in Town, as opposed to the old days when we were known in some instances as a sort of a sanctuary for a significant number of Jewish families who moved here because of the restrictive covenants in close by neighborhoods. And almost everyone else was Christian.

While a survey has not been done, I would say, based on my observations, that we have many more religions represented in our neighborhoods today, and we belong to a variety of religious institutions. So while I often get teased about the lack of certain types of diversity in Town, when it comes to religion that is certainly not the case.

As we read of news around the world and even in the United States, I note sadly that religious intolerance is still a major problem and causes war, loss of life and conflict in general. I am proud that we have no sign of religious intolerance in our municipality.

In this country, where we pledge allegiance to a flag *under God*, I feel it is important for elected officials to promote the value of any and all religions in our official capacities. By openly talking about our faiths, we create a broader understanding of one another, make everyone feel validated, and create a stronger sense of community. And this type of respect must also be afforded to our atheist friends, too.

As the holiday season approaches and many of us will be celebrating Christmas, Chanukah, and Kwanzaa, let’s take the lead this year and not only enjoy the commercialization of these events, but use it as a moment to learn more about their religious nature. In that way, we can all do our part in attacking religious intolerance in 2014.



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Deadline for copy and ads is the 15th of the month at 4:30 p.m.

Somerset Wellness Group Class On “Laugh-A-Yoga”



By Diane Horn,
Surrey Street

The Somerset Wellness group will be hosting an introductory class of **Laugh-A-Yoga** with yoga instructor Carol

Auerbach. Laughter yoga promotes wellness by combining voluntary laughter, relaxation techniques, and breathing exercises. Studies have shown that laughter wakes up your endorphins and reduces stress.

So, let's have a good laugh together. Our tentative date for the class is **Thursday, December 12th in the evening**. For more information and to reserve a spot please contact **Diane Horn** at diane.b.horn@gmail.com or 301-654-0310.



Letter to the Editor

The Town's leaf pickup is a boon, and thanks are due to all concerned. The monthly week-long collection periods provide an interesting schedule, but is it the best that can be devised? For some residents, weekly collection could be even more convenient. For example, there would be less time for raked leaves to be exposed to the wind, to be blown on to neighbors' lawns and streets.

Has the Council considered a weekly collection schedule? This could be achieved by grouping the Town's streets into five sections, serving each on a specific weekday, e.g., Street Group 1 every Monday, Group 2 every Tuesday, and so on. Or the existing "Quadrants" could be retained, and Fridays reserved for catch-up. Worth a trial next season?

Gabriel Roth, Falstone Avenue



Pool House Renovation Wins Fifth Award

By Marnie Shaul, Council Vice President



Front Row: Barabara Condos and Marnie Shaul Attend the NAIOP Award Program.

At its annual awards program on October 3, 2013, the Maryland/DC Chapter of NAIOP, a commercial real estate development association, honored our contractor Therrien Waddell, Inc. with an Award of Excellence for the renovation of the Somerset pool facility. This award was in the category of Best Institutional Facility. The selection committee noted that "Therrien Waddell had restored an outdated facility with a sensitive use of materials and superior consideration for environmental impact both during construction and future operations. The resulting design reflects a sense of fine craftsmanship and creative ventilation and lighting. The judges were unanimous in their praise of this very small scale project that achieved spectacular results."

The awards program was a black tie event at the Willard Hotel. **Council members Barbara Condos** (Falstone) and **Marnie Shaul** (Uppingham) joined Jerry Therrien and other TW staff at the ceremony.



Town Hall Interior Work

Interior work in the Town Hall will continue through the first half of December. Thanks to everyone for your patience during this period. No rentals of the Town Hall or exercise classes will be taking place while the work is underway. The December Council Meeting will be held off site, probably at Somerset Elementary School. Please contact the Town Hall with any specific questions.

Leaf Collection Reminders



Leaf collection will continue until **mid to late December**. All leaves should be raked to the curb. Do not rake or blow your leaves into the street. Please make sure that there are no cans, sticks, bottles or rocks in your leaf pile. It is also important that you do not block leaf piles with your car during the hours of **9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**, Monday thru Friday, because our crew cannot do its work if there is a car blocking the pile.

Town Website Update

Our new Town website is scheduled to go live the first week of December. There will be an adjustment period, so we would greatly appreciate your patience as we transition into using the new website for the Town's communications.

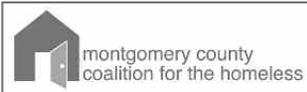
Employee Holiday Gift Fund ❄️❄️

Please refer to Mayor Slavin's article in this month's Journal on the holiday fund for Town employees. Last year was the first year of the program, and it was a great success. Thanks much in advance for your generosity this holiday season.

Holiday Collections at Town Hall



As has been mentioned on the Town email announcements, there is a box on the Town Hall porch for holiday collections of toys, canned food and clothing. We will be taking collections for the following



three organizations: **Toys for Tots, Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, and Interfaith Works**. Please contact the Town Hall if you would like information on

these organizations or look out for future email blasts. **Collections will be received until December 12, 2013.**

Winter Reminders



Now that we are approaching winter, here are a few reminders:

- **Snow Removal:** Mulheron Tree Experts will again be the Town's contractor for snow removal. Regarding sidewalk cleaning, please be advised that the Town

Code states that when less than two inches of snow accumulate in the front or on the side of your property, it is the responsibility of the homeowner to keep those areas clear. The Town contractor is responsible for removing snow in excess of two inches.

- **Snow Plows:** Please be mindful of the plows that clear our roads by doing your best to keep cars parked in driveways as opposed to on the streets. This enables the plows to do a better job.
- **Batting Cage:** The batting cage located at the Town Hall is going to be closed from December through February. In the past, snow caused some damage to the cage. The cage will open again in early March.
- **Odd Jobs Helpers:** Finally, please keep in the mind the "odd jobs" list that was distributed to Town residents as an insert in the Town Journal. If you are interested in hiring someone for snow shoveling or maintenance around your property during the winter months, take a look at this list. Contact the Town Hall if you need a new copy.

Bamboo on Little Falls Parkway

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will be contracting out bamboo removal

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Council Meeting Actions

The Town Council met in regular session on November 4, 2013. The Council took the following actions:

1. Approval of the FY13 Audit as recommended by the Audit Committee.
2. Approval of a recommendation taken by the Council acting as the Local Advisory Panel to the Historic Preservation Commission on an application submitted for 4712 Cumberland Avenue.
3. Approval of a building permit extension for 5513 Uppingham Street until December 15, 2013.
4. Approval of the removal of an 18” Norway Maple located in the wooded area behind 5615 Warwick Place as recommended by the Town Arborist.
5. Approval of the removal of a Pin Oak Town tree located at 4700 Essex Avenue as recommended by the Town Arborist. A replacement tree is to be planted in the spring.
6. Approval of the removal of 5 Tulip Poplar and 2 Leyland Cypress trees in the rear yard at 4922 Cumberland Avenue as recommended by the Town Arborist. Reforestation includes 2 canopy and 3 ornamental trees.
7. Approval of the allocation of \$1,000.00 to the Parks and Natural Resources Committee for guest speakers in relation to a conservation landscaping event that is going to be held at the Town Hall on February 23, 2014.
8. Approval to authorize Mayor Slavin to provide comments in relation to the zoning rewrite that is currently taking place by Montgomery County.
9. Approval of PCO 9R in the amount of \$1,447.80 to provide an AS cable hanging system in lieu of Ogee wood trim in the council meeting room.
10. Approval of PCO 10 in the amount of \$1,089.00 to replace the existing closet doors in the Mayor’s office and pantry area.
11. Denial of PCO 15 in the amount of \$1,180.00 to install a one-piece slate hearth over the existing stone hearth in the Mayor’s office. The item would be considered at a later date.
12. Approval of an invoice in the amount of \$6,745.00 to be paid to Balodemas Architects for work in relation to the Town Hall interior cosmetic work.
13. The meeting was held at the Somerset Elementary School this month due to the cosmetic work taking place in the Town Hall. In addition to the Council actions, Mayor Slavin provided his report to the Council and Town Manager Charnovich provided the Financial Report to the Council.



By Mayor Jeffrey Slavin

Somerset's Halloween celebration was outstanding again this year and, thankfully, uneventful. I attended the Somerset Elementary School parade in the mid-afternoon, and it was wonderful. I recommend it to everyone! Later that day, I was pleased to "receive" over 300 trick-or-treaters at my house on Warwick Place between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. I was glad to see our police officer on duty and to learn that no incidents were reported. As usual, there was a heavy turnout on Cumberland, and lots of kids came from neighboring communities. There have been several requests that next year the Town close Cumberland to car traffic for at least of couple of hours on Halloween. I will ask the Council to consider this proposal in September of 2014.



Work is proceeding on the restoration/refreshing of the Town Hall. Much of the painting in the office areas has been completed, and the floors refinished. It all looks beautiful! I am eager to show off the finished product next month. I want to note how well our Town Council, once again, has worked under the leadership of **Council members Barbara Zeughouser** (Trent) and **Franny Peale** (Uppingham) to make the numerous decisions this project required. While the work is somewhat over budget, given that the Town Hall has been neglected for the past two decades, I feel that the investments we are making now are needed to protect one of Somerset's most important and most used assets.

Unfortunately, it seems that the copper thieves that were plaguing the Bethesda–Chevy Chase area several years ago might be back. Copper gutters were recently stolen from a house on Cumberland in the middle of the day. We are working with the police to assist in any way we can to solve this crime. I am asking everyone to be attentive to any suspicious activities in the neighborhood. We will provide more information on this as we receive it.

Council Vice President Marnie Shaul (Uppingham), Council member **Barbara Condos** (Falstone) and I attended the Maryland Municipal League's Annual Fall Legislative Conference to set priorities for the upcoming session of the Maryland General Assembly. This year, the conference was held in beautiful Solomons, Maryland, and lasted for almost three days. We attended a variety of excellent seminars on topics relevant to our work, networked with other municipal officials, and passed through the small trade show. The guest speaker at the legislative luncheon was **Senate President Mike Miller**. We sat with other electeds from our County. I always get re-energized at these meetings and come away with lots of new ideas.



Mayor Slavin and Council Vice President Marnie Shaul on Veterans Day presented a beautiful wreath to honor our area's veterans.

On another note, **Council Member Shaul** and **Council Member Barbara Zeughouser** and I recently attended the Bethesda area County celebration of Veterans Day in Veterans Park at the intersection of Woodmont and Norfolk Avenues. **County Council member Roger Berliner** and **Congressman Chris Van Hollen** provided remarks, and we heard a moving story from a local Admiral. We presented a beautiful wreath to honor our area's veterans who have done so much to keep us all safe.

Due to the temporary closing of the Town Hall this month, our annual community service day will be postponed to sometime early next year. While the staff does a great deal of work to prepare for this event, I am looking for one or two persons in the Town to serve as chairs. Please get in touch with me as soon as possible if you are interested. This event is always a rewarding experience for everyone. In the meantime, we will be collecting toys, canned goods, and clothing this month to benefit people in need in the County.

Happy Chanukah, Merry Christmas, and Happy Kwanzaa!

along portions of the Little Falls Parkway. This is being done to improve travel safety and visibility for motorists along the parkway. The work will be completed by a private contractor, Patriot Land and Wildlife Management, and has been funded through the Hoyt property development project for Non-Native-Invasive plant removal. The contractor will be removing the bamboo to a distance of approximately twenty feet from white line (edge of roadway) to lessen the likelihood of the bamboo falling onto the roadway or impeding traffic during inclement weather. The long-term plan is to re-establish a more suitable landscaping screen along these areas of roadway. This work has been ongoing and we hope to have it completed by the middle of December.



New Lawn Fertilizer Law

A **new Lawn Fertilizer Law** became effective October 1, 2013 in Maryland. It offers guidelines to reduce the risk of nutrient runoff in local waterways. Fertilizer season will resume March 1, 2014, allowing residents and lawn care professionals to apply products with some restrictions. Information on this new law can be found at the Maryland Department of Agriculture website at: <http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/fertilizer.aspx>



General Permits



Tree Removal Permits

5526 Trent Street, 1 Sweetgum
4807 Essex Avenue, 1 Red Maple

Wall Permit

5510 Trent Street, retaining wall
at the rear of the property

Driveway Apron Permit

4713 Trent Court

Somerset Employee Holiday Fund

Message from the Mayor |

Dear Residents,

Since last year's holiday fund effort to thank Somerset employees was so successful, I am asking that the Town recognize our hard working staff again this year. I began this activity in 2012 in response to the many resident calls and emails I had received during holidays past asking how to thank our dedicated staff.

I hope that all Town residents will show their gratitude by contributing generously. The pooled monies will be distributed, after Council review, based on length of service and responsibility. Other municipalities in the area make the distributions in this manner, which seems fair and equitable. The ten employees who will share in the fund are: one administrative staff member, four police personnel, three maintenance employees, one arborist and one code enforcement officer. Town Manager Rich Charnovich has chosen to not participate in the program.

All contributions should be by check made payable to the Town of Somerset, with "**Holiday Fund**" placed on the note line. Checks can be mailed or delivered to the Town Hall, 4510 Cumberland Avenue, 20815 or left at my residence at 5706 Warwick Place. Enclosed in this month's Journal is an envelope for your use. Please send in your contributions before Monday, December 16th. There will be a second distribution after the holidays to take into account any additional contributions received after this date.

Your gifts will be greatly appreciated by those who do so much for us.

Best wishes for you and your families this holiday season.

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor



Preliminary Agenda

Regular Somerset Town Council Meeting

Somerset Town Hall, December 2, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.

The Somerset Town Council will meet in regular session on Monday, December 2, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at the Somerset Elementary School (tentatively). Agenda updates are posted on the Town website: www.townofsomerset.com.

Council Meeting Convenes – 7:00 p.m.

****Council Meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. this month only and will need to end by 10:00 p.m. since it is being held at the Somerset Elementary School (tentatively).**

Comments: Public Comment Period – 7:00 p.m.*

CONSENT

NON-CONSENT

1. **Discussion:** Town Manager's December Financial Report – 7:05 p.m.
2. **Public/Hearing:** To consider confirmation approval of an emergency HVAC unit replacement submitted by Joshua Bobeck and Susan Glickman, 5534 Warwick Place contingent upon the unit passing the required noise level requirements – 7:10 p.m.
3. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider a site plan amendment submitted by Babak Bagheri and Pouneh Razavi at 4710 Falstone Avenue. The HVAC Unit has been installed at the north side of the house instead of the rear of the house that was previously approved – 7:15p.m.
4. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of an application submitted by Jim and Maura Vanderzon, 4902 Falstone Avenue. The applicant is requesting to install a deck screen – 7:25 p.m.
5. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider 2 proposals submitted by Mulheron Tree Experts to remove the top of a tree located at the rear of 5613 Warwick Place as recommended by the Town Arborist – 7:35 p.m.
Option 1: \$7,200.00 (includes clean up work and removal of debris)
Option 2: \$5,700.00 (does not include clean up work and removal of debris)
6. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider confirmation approval of PCO 15R in the amount of \$787.00 to install a new slate hearth over the existing stone hearth in the Mayor's office – 7:45 p.m.
7. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider confirmation approval of PCO 19 for the Town Hall project in the amount of \$334.00. The scope is to replace the 4 large supply and return grilles in the meeting room and hallway – 7:50 p.m.
8. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider approval of an invoice from SMI Sign Systems, Inc. in the amount of \$1,070.48 for signage improvements to the Town Hall building – 7:55 p.m.
9. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider adoption of a Resolution adopting the Montgomery County 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan – 8:00 p.m.



Council Members: Barbara Zeughhauser, Cathy Pickar, Marnie Shaul, Franny Peale, Barbara Condos

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10. **Public Hearing/Motion:** To consider adoption of a Resolution confirming the Town of Somerset's intent to pursue the Sustainable Maryland certification – 8:10 p.m.
11. **Discussion:** Mayor's Report – 8:15 p.m.
12. **Adjourn:** – 8:20 p.m.

Council work session will take place after the Regular Meeting if time permits.

Key

Public Hearing Item: Agenda item where public comment is permitted.

Discussion Item: Agenda item limited to discussion among the Council, Mayor and Town Staff.

Motion Item: Agenda item requesting action, limited to Council discussion.

Comments: Opinions and Questions from Town residents.

* Residents who wish to be present for a particular Agenda item are advised to arrive 20 minutes ahead of the item's scheduled discussion time since discussions sometimes run ahead of schedule.

This is a preliminary Agenda prepared to meet the Journal press deadline, which typically is two to three weeks prior to the next Town Council meeting. During this period, there will likely be changes to the timing of items, and some items may be added or deleted. Please contact Rich Charnovich at Town Hall if you are interested in what has been added, or consult the bulletin board on the Town Hall porch or the Town website/email blasts for the most up-to-date Agenda.